

Neighborhood Gardens
City Block 558, bounded by North Seventh,
North Eighth, Biddle, and O'Fallon Streets
St. Louis (independent city)
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1834

HABS
MO,
96-SALU,
109 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NEIGHBORHOOD GARDENS

HABS No. MO-1834

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109-

Location: City Block 558, bounded by North Seventh, North Eighth, Biddle, and O'Fallon Streets, St. Louis (independent city), Missouri

USGS Granite City, IL/MO Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates: 15/744680/4280000

Present Owner: Neighborhood Gardens Partnership, 1205 North Seventh Street, St. Louis, MO 63106

Present Occupant: apartment tenants

Present Use: apartments

Significance: Commissioned by a local charitable organization, Neighborhood Gardens is an example of a project that succeeded in its goal to provide well-designed, privately funded, profitable, and low-cost housing for the residents of St. Louis.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of construction: 1934-1935
2. Architect: Hoener, Baum and Froese, a St. Louis firm, designed the building with assistance from the Managing Director of Neighborhood Association, J.A. Wolf, who had studied low-income housing examples in Europe.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Neighborhood Gardens was owned by Neighborhood Association until 1962. Subsequent changes in ownership occurred in 1964, 1968, 1970, 1973, 1974, 1977, 1980, and 1982.
4. Contractor: H.B. Deal Construction Company
5. Alterations: The buildings are for the most part unaltered except for cosmetic changes, such as the addition of corrugated awnings over most of the third floor balconies.

- B. Historical Context: Formed in 1911 by a merger of two similar organizations, Neighborhood Association was founded to serve the needs of slum residents of St. Louis. In light of lack of public efforts to provide adequate housing for low-income people, Neighborhood Association determined in 1927 to take steps to prove that private ventures could both serve the people and make a profit.

The organization's Better Housing Committee was created in 1930 to develop a specific plan for a housing project. J.A. Wolf, a social worker and managing director of Neighborhood Association, was a member of the committee. He received a grant in 1931 to study low-cost housing in Europe for four months, returning to work with the architects selected to design the St. Louis project.

Although Neighborhood Gardens was a successful design for its purpose and also financially sound, it was not a total success in its goal of serving the residents of its area. People living within the neighborhood were to be given preference in apartment allocation but in practice many were displaced by the rental costs, which, from \$19.50 to \$33.00 per month, were modest. Tenancy requirements were broadened to also include people who had formerly lived in the neighborhood, and those who wanted to move to the neighborhood in order to save transportation costs to work downtown. Still, the Better Housing Committee did demonstrate that well-designed, well-landscaped, low-cost housing could be developed that would also return an adequate profit.

Unfortunately, the St. Louis business community did not follow up on this proof. Still, Neighborhood Gardens continues to be financially sound and may yet provide some instruction for would-be designers of low-income housing.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: Occupying a full city block, Neighborhood Gardens is composed of 252 apartments in three buildings grouped around six interior courtyards. The three-story brick-faced buildings exhibit characteristics associated with the international style, such as the typical steel-framed, multi-paned windows, but also show the stripped planarity and understated, horizontal decorative motifs associated with moderne. The structures are, however, firmly rooted in St. Louis brick vernacular tradition, with their imaginative and practical use of that common local material.
- B. Description of Exterior:
 - 1. Walls: facing - polychromatic common brick and double-size shale brick laid in three alternating bonds.
 - 2. Structural system: load-bearing cinder block walls
 - 3. Balconies: Each apartment has a concrete balcony.

4. Openings:

- a. Doorways: The main entrance to the complex is on the west side. There are seven total entrance stair bays off the street on the north, east, and south elevations. The remaining 16 bays open off the interior courtyards. Each apartment has an entrance directly off the stairs.
- b. Windows: All windows are fitted with standard-sized metal casements. The window sills are stone (except for those in the stair bays).

5. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: flat, concrete
- b. Cornice: dentilled brick

- C. Description of Interior: For floor plans, see the accompanying data pages (used by permission of Carolyn H. Toft, Landmarks Association of St. Louis). All of the units have concrete floors, cross-ventilation and 12-foot ceilings. The bedrooms and bed alcoves have double closets. The kitchens have built-in cabinets, ice chests, and a gas stove.
- D. Site: Occupying an entire city block approximately 2.5 acres in size, Neighborhood Gardens is located in a densely-populated urban neighborhood to the north of St. Louis' central business district. Sixty per cent of the site is devoted to landscaped open space.

PART III. SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Toft, Carolyn H. Neighborhood Gardens Apartments. National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1986.

Prepared by: Holly K. Chamberlain
Historian
HABS
May, 1988

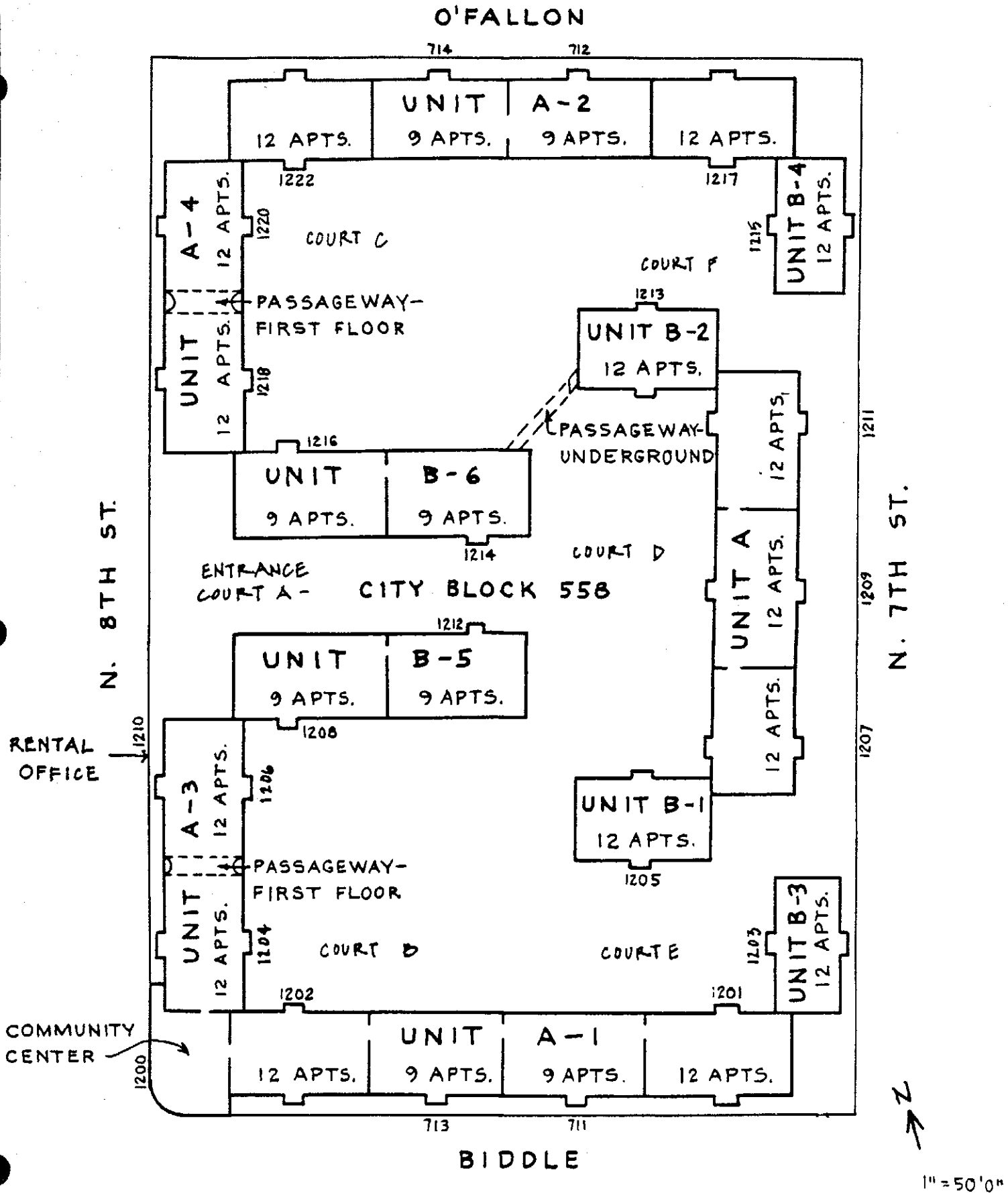
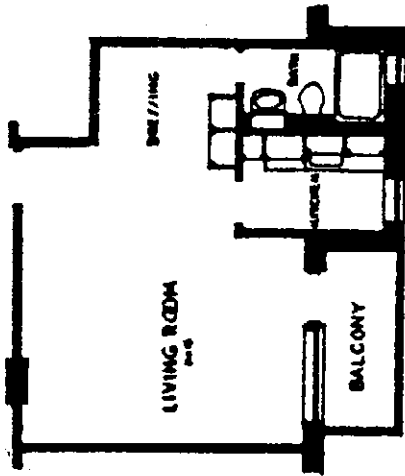
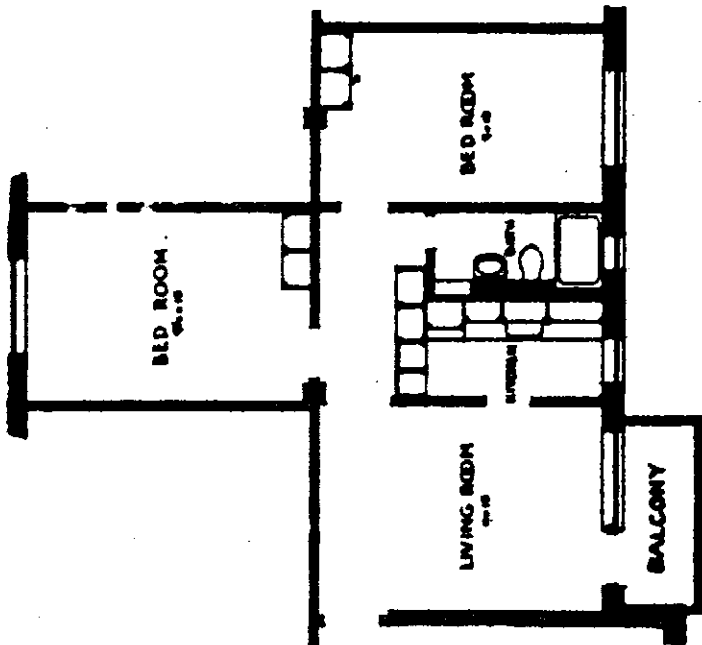
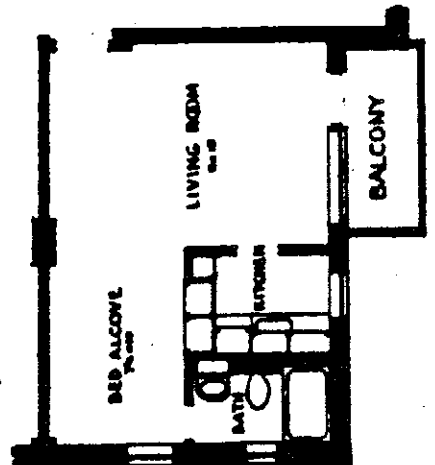
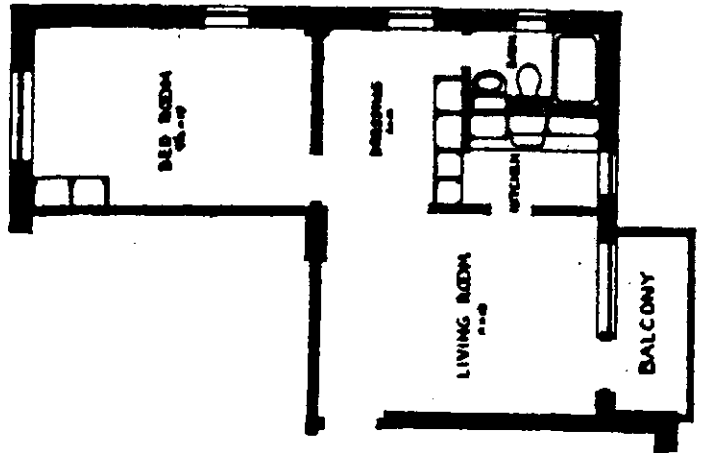


Figure #1



TYPICAL
EFFICIENCY UNITS
AND
APARTMENT UNITS
NEIGHBORHOOD
GARDENS
ST LOUIS MO
(OFFICE 1210 NO 8TH ST)



Addendum to:
Neighborhood Gardens
City Block 558, bounded by North Seventh,
North Eighth, Biddle, and O'Fallon Streets
St. Louis (independent city)
Missouri

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109-

PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM TO:
NEIGHBORHOOD GARDENS
Eighth Street between Biddle & O'Fallon Streets
Saint Louis
St. Louis City County
Missouri

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